

THE REFORMER AND CHRISTIAN.

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth.—*Jeremiah*, v. 1.

VOL. XIII. No. 2.]

PHILADELPHIA, FEBRUARY, 1833.

[Whole No. 146]

DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

[By T. Southwood Smith.]

Of the manner in which the Divine Government is administered.

When the Deity is represented as appointing and controlling every event, it may seem difficult to conceive how this can be reconciled with the agency and accountability of man. A little consideration, however, will shew that these truths are not incompatible with each other.

Though the Sovereign Arbitrator of events regulates and determines every thing, yet he carries on the administration of the world by the *instrumentality* of other beings. Seldom does he act *directly*; seldom is he the *immediate* cause of any thing. He has left the developement of his vast plan to the operation of what are termed secondary causes; but these can act only so far and in such a manner as he has appointed.

The material world is governed by certain general laws, which are never interrupted except on occasions of supreme importance, foreseen and provided for from the beginning. These laws, though thus steady and invariable in their operation, bring about in every instant of time, precisely that condition only of the material world which he appoints, and which is necessary to carry on his purposes with regard to his animal and moral creation.

The animal and moral world he governs by laws equally fixed and invariable; but being of a nature different from that of the material world, they require to be governed by different laws. By different laws, therefore, they are governed: by laws admirably and

exactly suited to its nature, each is guided to its destined end. The material world being without sensation and thought, is governed by a particular set of laws. The animal world possessing sensation and thought, is governed by another set. By sensation and thought an animal is induced to act. Every animal possesses a fixed and determinate constitution, according to which, sensation and thought are excited in it in a particular determinate manner.—The great agent in inducing sensation and thought in the animal, is the material world. A certain state of the material world will inevitably produce a certain sensation in an animal, possessing a particular constitution: that sensation will produce a particular volition, and that volition will lead, *certainly*, to a particular action. It only requires, therefore, an exact knowledge of the constitution of the animal world to render its state at all times precisely what may be required: for he who perfectly understands the constitution of the material and the animal worlds, and has a sovereign control over both, has only to adapt the state of the one to that of the other, to make both at any and at all periods, exactly what he wishes. While every animal goes on regularly to exercise its different functions, he may at all times maintain the whole animal world in the condition he pleases: for he may so modify the operation of the material world upon it, as inevitably to bring it into the state he wishes. Thus a sovereign control may be exercised over the material and animal worlds, while both invariably act according to the settled principles of their nature.

If we ascend in the scale of crea-

tion, we shall find that the principle of the Divine administration is exactly the same. Man is endowed not only with the faculties of sensation and thought, but with the power of distinguishing between the rectitude and immorality of conduct. He is capable of understanding his obligations and the grounds of them. Certain actions appear to him to be good: others he regards as evil. The performance of the one is attended with a consciousness that he has acted right, and excites the sensation of happiness; the performance of the other is attended with an inward conviction that he has acted wrong, and produces misery.

All this takes place in a fixed and invariable manner according to certain laws which are termed principles of his nature, and the faculty on which this discrimination and feeling depends, is termed, his *moral* nature.

Now it is obvious, that to a certain extent, a being thus endowed, may be governed exactly in the same manner as a creature who possesses only an animal nature. In him, as well as in the mere animal, sensations will be excited by the external circumstances in which he is placed. In him too, a particular sensation will excite a particular volition; but the exercise of this volition will be attended with a result which is never found in the animal: with a consciousness that he has acted well or ill: with a feeling of approbation or of disappointment: with a sensation of happiness or misery, arising purely from the action itself. This train of sensation becomes itself a new source of action; but it arises according to certain fixed laws, and operates as steadily as any other principle of his nature, or as any law of the material world. He, therefore, who perfectly understands *this* nature, who knows how every circumstance will affect this *moral* agent, and who has a sovereign control over events, can govern him with the same steadiness with which he regulates the animal or the material world: can make him at all times

feel, and think, and act, as may be necessary to carry on the great designs of his administration, without violating any principle of his nature. By adapting the particular situation in which he is placed to the particular state of his mind, he can excite whatever volition, and secure whatever action he pleases. What is maintained, then, is, that with respect to every individual in the world, there is this exact adaptation of circumstances to his temper, his habits, his wants, so that while he is left to the full and free exercise of every faculty he possesses, he can feel and act only as the Sovereign of the Universe appoints; because the circumstances which excite his sensations and volitions, are determined by him. It is not just to suppose that the Deity exercises any such control over his creatures, as to force them to act contrary to their will, or to violate any principle of their nature: they always act, and must act, according to their will, and in conformity to their nature; but, at the same time, he secures his own purpose, by placing them in circumstances which so operate upon their nature, as certainly to induce the conduct he requires.*

[For an omission here, see the *Reformer* for December, 1831, p. 101.]

* It has been argued by almost all who have hitherto written on the origin of Evil, that its existence could not have been prevented, unless an absolute restraint had been placed upon the will. This is not true: for there might have been given to mankind a knowledge of their welfare so clear and strong, as effectually to have secured their choice of it. In other words, they might have been brought under the influence of motives so powerfully determining them to the choice of good, that it would not have been possible for them, their circumstances remaining the same, to have chosen evil. This has been distinctly admitted by a late writer, who, though he has laboured to reconcile, and sometimes very successfully, the evil which actually exists, with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, yet has carefully avoided opposing or even alluding to those theological opinions which involve this subject in great and insurmountable difficulty.

Nor is it any objection to this view of the manner in which the Divine administration is carried on, that it implies a constant influence of the Deity over the human mind. There is no reasonable being who does not exercise some influence of this kind over the minds of others. What a powerful influence does the parent exert over the child, the master over the servant, brother over brother, and friend over friend! How can I measure the degree; how can I estimate the value of the influence which that revered instructor exercised over my mind, who first imbued it with the principles of wisdom and rectitude? What do I not

"It is a position wholly untenable that according to our view of the subject, the degree of the moral evil must necessarily have been as great as it is, unless an absolute restraint had been laid upon the will of man. Without entering into metaphysical discussions, it may be safely assumed that the will is determined by the greater apparent good, and that when it makes a bad election, in defiance of reason and judgment, the dismissal of some present uneasiness, or the possession of some present gratification, is the greatest apparent good for the time being. Had, then, their real interest, upon a full view of their present and future condition, been placed before all mankind with a clear distinctness which we can certainly conceive, because we have examples of it on record; free-will, though exposed to less chance of error, would not have been annihilated; and yet it would have been as morally impossible for man to chose evil in opposition to good, as we imagine it to be for the glorified inheritors of a future state; as it proved to be for Jesus Christ, during his adoption of human nature, with its temptations and infirmities; or, to go no farther, as it appears to be for good men when they approach the termination of their course, after a long perseverance in the habit and practice of virtue." Treatise on the records of the Creation. By John Bird Sumner, M. A. Vol. II. p. 228.

There can be no doubt that the will is invariably *determined* by the greater apparent good: or to state the fact more generally, the will is invariably determined by motive, and with a steadiness and strength always in proportion to the uniformity and vigor of the motive.

owe to that dear companion of my youth, on whose early intercourse with me memory still delights to dwell; who was my superior in age, in attainment, in wisdom, in virtue; who taught me so much while seeming to learn, and governed me so entirely without meaning to control! How many of the sensations which cheer my heart at this hour are the result of an influence which commenced at that distant period! How much of my present character is wholly dependent on that influence! It was he who corrected that disposition, the seed of which had long lain dormant in my heart; which then was springing up rapidly, and which, had it been suffered to fix its root deeply there, would have made me a totally different being. It was he who first led me into that train of thought which directed the future pursuits of my mind, placed me in the station of life I occupy, formed the connexions which bind me by the strongest and sweetest ties to my fellow-beings; made me what I am, and determined what I am to be. It was my friend who influenced me: it was a higher Being, a wiser and better friend, the unerring and unchanging friend of both, who influenced him.

May not these considerations suffice to give us a clear and just conception of the kind of influence which the Deity exercises over us, and by which he works his purposes in us and by us? It differs from that of our wisest and best friend only in being as much wiser and better, as wisdom and goodness in absolute perfection are different from the faint and transient indications of these attributes which are found in mortals.

The only objection of importance which can be urged against this view of the divine government, is, that it seems to lessen accountability, and to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice. Let us not be deceived by the sound of words. When we say that man is accountable, what do we mean? We can only mean that he

will be punished for doing what he knows is wrong, and rewarded for performing what he is conscious is right. It is that rectitude of will which leads him to discharge his duty, which constitutes him virtuous: it is that perversion of mind which induces him to violate it, which renders him vicious. When his volition is good, and he obeys it, we say that he is an object of approbation, and worthy of reward: when his volition is evil, and he yields to it, we say that he is an object of disapprobation, and worthy of punishment. It is the nature of his volition which determines our notion respecting his worth or his demerit. We neither do nor ought to regard the *cause* of his volition. It is the evil of his will of which we disapprove, and to which it is necessary to apply the discipline of correction.

You demand why, since my volition is independent of myself, and excited by circumstances over which I have no control, am I accountable for its nature, or liable to punishment if it be evil? The reply is obvious. This objection is founded on the implied presumption that volition is induced at the pleasure of the mind, and that it is the exertion of this power in exciting an evil volition, which constitutes guilt. For when it is asked, why am I to be punished for my volition, since it is independent of myself? the inquirer must pre-suppose that he is to be punished for his volition *because* it is dependent upon himself, which is assuming as true the very point in dispute, and raising an objection on that assumption. If, however, there be any truth in the account which has been given of the origin of volition, that assumption is totally fallacious.

I am not to be punished for my volition, you say, because it is independent of myself and excited by circumstances over which I have no control. I reply, if your volition be evil, and you obey it, it is that very circumstance which renders you worthy of punishment, and that the dependence or in-

dependence of the volition on yourself does not at all affect the question. Your volition is evil: you deserve punishment: why? *In order that that evil volition may be corrected.* Punishment is not retrospective but prospective. You are to be punished not because you have yielded to an evil volition; but in order that you may yield to an evil volition no more. To inflict pain for the past, any further than the past has reference for the future, is revenge, not punishment: were it perfectly certain that an evil volition which is past would be attended with no ill consequences in time to come, it would be neither necessary nor just to visit it with suffering; but because an evil volition is evil, that is, because it tends to produce unhappiness, it is to be punished, in order that the misery it threatens may be prevented. It is the incorrect conception which is formed of the nature and object of punishment, therefore, which lies at the foundation of this objection, and which makes the subject appear so difficult to many persons; and I cannot but think that all doubt and difficulty respecting it will be removed from the mind of every one who will consider with attention what is said on this subject in the third chapter of this work.

The train of circumstances in which an individual has been placed has given rise to a disposition, the indulgence of which is incompatible with his own happiness and with that of his fellow-beings. This disposition it is necessary to correct: this correction is accomplished by causing him to pass through another train of circumstances which makes him feel the evil of his conduct; and this discipline, being attended with suffering, is expressed by the term punishment.

Such, then, being the foundation of praise and blame; of reward and punishment; it is obvious, that a person is an object of moral approbation, and is worthy of reward when his volition is good, and when he obeys that volition; that he is an object of moral dis-

approbation, and is worthy of punishment when his volition is evil, and when, notwithstanding the voice which speaks within him, and which warns him of its nature, he yields to its impulse. The gold which incites the midnight plunderer to rob, is not blameable, though it is the immediate cause of the volition which induces the evil deed: it is the volition itself which is evil, and which requires to be rectified, and punishment is the process, the moral discipline by which its correction is effected.

Thus, then, we seem to have a clear and just conception of the manner in which the whole train of circumstances which form the character and induce the conduct of moral agents, may be entirely the appointment of the Deity, while the agents themselves are at the same time the subjects of praise and blame, of reward and punishment.

Were there no evil in the world there could be no possible objection to this view of the subject.* Were every one virtuous and happy, every heart would rejoice to trace to the Deity its excellences and its pleasures. But how can he who is perfect in benignity, be the author of evil? It is this which perplexes the mind, and the answer to the question involves the great inquiry about which intelligent and pious persons in all ages exercised their most anxious thoughts, and leads directly to the consideration of the *design* of the Deity in the administration of the world. Into the consideration of this subject we shall enter in the next section: but before proceeding to it, it may be proper to notice an objection, of minor importance, which is sometimes urged against the doc-

* Neither would there be the same objection to it in the minds of many persons, did it only attribute to the Deity the production of natural evil. But the misery occasioned by an *earthquake* or by *disease*, is often as great as that produced by the bad passions of mankind: and it is altogether as difficult to account for the existence of natural as of moral evil. Indeed, the same account must be given of both.

trine of providence, and which has been stated and answered in so excellent a manner by Dr. Price, in his admirable *Disquisition on Providence*, (p. 47,) that it seems a kind of injustice to the subject to employ any language but his own.

"It has been often objected that it is impairing the beauty of the world, and representing it as a production more imperfect than any work of human art, to maintain that it cannot subsist of itself, or that it requires the hand of its Maker to be always at it to continue its motions and order.

"The full answer to this objection is, that to every machine or perpetual movement for answering any particular purpose, there always belongs some *first mover*, some *weight* or *spring*, or other power which is continually acting upon it, and from which all its motions are derived: nor, without such power, is it possible to conceive of any such machine. The machine of the universe then, like all besides analogous to it, of which we have any idea, must have a *first mover*. Now it has been demonstrated that this first mover cannot be matter itself. It follows, therefore, that this objection is so far from being of any force, that it leads us to the very conclusion which it is brought to overthrow.

"The excellence of a machine by no means depends on its going properly of *itself*, for this is impossible; but on the skill with which its various parts are adjusted to one another, and all its different effects are derived from the constant action of some power. What would indeed make a machine appear imperfect and deformed is, assigning a separate power to every distinct part, without allowing any place for mechanism; and, in like manner, what would really make the frame of nature appear imperfect and deformed is, resolving phenomena too soon to the divine agency, or supposing it the *immediate* cause of every particular effect. But I have not been pleading for this, but only, that however far mechanism may be

carried and the chain of causes extend in the material universe, to the Divine power exerted continually in all places, every law and every effect and motion in it must be *at last* resolved. This is a conclusion which the modern improvements in natural philosophy have abundantly confirmed, and which some of the first and best philosophers have received; nor can that philosophy be otherwise than little and contemptible which hides the Deity from our views, which excludes him from the world, or does not terminate in the acknowledgment and adoration of him as the maker, preserver and ruler of all things.*

THE CONDITION OF MAN.

God, who is infinite in power, is capable of making man a free agent, and consequently, accountable for his actions; and he has seen fit, in his wisdom and providence, to place him in a condition of great trial, and surrounded him with many difficulties; not with a view to his disadvantage, but in order that he may, by rightly enduring trials, and surmounting the difficulties that beset his way, be capable of, and be rendered a fit subject for much higher advancement and glory hereafter, than he ever would be, were he not placed in such a condition of trial, and sur-

* "The philosopher who overlooks the traces of an all-governing Deity in nature, contenting himself with the appearances of the material universe only, and the mechanical laws of motion, neglects what is most excellent; and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever." Mr. Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Discoveries. Book IV. Chap ix. Sect. 1.

"Sir Isaac Newton thought it most unaccountable to exclude the Deity *only* out of the universe. It appeared to him much more just and reasonable to suppose that the whole chain of causes, or the several series of them, should centre in him as their source, and the whole system appear depending on him the only independent cause." Ibid. Sect. 5.

rounded with such difficulties. Hence the apostle Paul speaks of the "children of God," as being "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," (who we know is far above the angels,) and says; "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Again, says the Apostle; "Know ye not that we shall judge angels."

Man, therefore, has no cause for complaint, except it be his present very responsible condition, and his state of accountability under the difficulties that surround him—without which difficulties, however, he would never be capable of much virtue, or ever enjoy such high advancement and glory hereafter, as now await him, if he prove faithful under those difficulties. And then again, it is to be observed, if any one, under the trials and difficulties which beset his way, feels his own weakness and inability to guide and direct his steps, and commits his cause and himself to the care and direction of the Lord, sincerely desiring that he will order his ways aright, the Lord will assuredly regard his prayer and attend to his request. But while any one is full of self-confidence, and trusts to his own ability and sufficiency to keep himself, and to direct his ways in the difficult paths he will be called to walk, he will often be left to see that his strength is but weakness, and that without divine aid and assistance he will be constantly going astray.

Witness the case of the Apostle Peter. Though warned by Christ of an approaching trial, he was confident in himself that he would be able to endure under it. And when Christ told him more positively that he would deny him, he continued equally confident in himself, and "spake the more vehemently," saying, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." Under these circumstances, Christ, in wisdom and mercy, and not in displeasure, left Peter to prove his own strength, and his dependence on

himself, (without that divine aid and holy keeping which would have kept him from denying his Lord) in order to cure him of his self-confidence, give him more humble views of himself, and lead him in future to put his reliance on the care and support of Him with whom all things are possible, and who will never fail any of those who put their trust in him. This fall of Peter, which was a necessary consequence of his being left to himself, because of his self-consequence, had the good effect for which it was permitted; for never afterwards do we hear him boasting of himself, or saying what he would do, and how faithful he would prove; for he had found that his own strength was not sufficient in the time of trial, and that it was only through Christ strengthening him, and keeping him, that he could endure and continue faithful in the hour of trial.

And all who are thus confident in themselves, will find, sooner or later, the truth of these words of Christ—*"Without me, ye can do nothing."*—This truth should serve to keep us humble, and lead us to put our trust alone in God to be guided and directed aright. But it is one of the hardest things for man to give up his own confidence in himself, and trust alone in God; and this is the reason that so many, like Peter, fail in doing what they intend; and the sooner they renounce this self-confidence and put their trust in the Lord, the sooner will they find their steps ordered and guided aright, and that grace will be given them according to their day.

It is to be observed that the other apostles were equally confident in themselves that they would not forsake Christ, and they all failed to perform the pledge which they imposed on themselves, and were all equally instructed in a better knowledge of themselves by the event. However inexcusable the act of their forsaking him might be, it grew out of their improper self-confidence; for had they felt and acknowledged their own weakness and

insufficiency, it is not likely Christ would have left them to be overcome in the time of trial, as such a circumstance would not have been necessary to convince them of their own weakness, and their need of divine aid and assistance. How fatal, therefore, to Peter and the other apostles, was their self-confidence, and how *bitterly* it caused Peter to *weep*.

CONCERNING FAITH.

The scriptures throughout, speak of faith as the alone medium of mercies and blessings to men. And it has been ordered in the wisdom of God that it should be so, that we may see our entire dependence on the Lord; for we can no more have faith when we choose, than we can command rain from heaven, or cause the dew to descend.—True faith, therefore, is the gift of God; and if he give us faith concerning any thing, it will be according to our faith; for Christ has said, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

It may be asked, Why have some faith and others not? To this it may be answered: All necessary faith will be given to those who see their own weakness and insufficiency, and put their reliance and trust in the Lord in the way of humble and sincere obedience to the light manifested to them. For if we sincerely seek to do the divine will, and improve the one talent bestowed on us, more will be given. And there is no ground of excuse for any. For however weak, frail, or alienated from righteousness any one may be, all can look unto the Lord, and ask him to dispose their hearts aright, and enable them to obey his precepts. And does not the apostle James say, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Christ has also said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him

that knocketh it shall be opened."—
Luke xi. 9, 10.

We are assured that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above," and that *without Christ*, or his aid in our behalf, *we can do nothing*. If left to ourselves, without divine assistance, we shall never become right; or if already right, we shall immediately go astray, and wander from the path of safety and peace. Whoever trusts to his own sufficiency is sure to fall; for says the prophet Jeremiah, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Therefore, the great necessity of looking unto the Lord, and putting our trust in him at all times for help and assistance; not forgetting that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. iv. 18.

It is a general and correct sentiment, that there can be no faith without evidence. But faith is no less the gift of God on this account; for the evidences of a divine faith are such as none but God can give. The Lord enlightens the understanding of those who look unto him, and presents such evidences before their minds that they cannot well help believing, or having the fullest conviction of the truth and reality of that which is presented for their belief. It is their willingness or unwillingness to admit and receive the evidences presented to their minds, that their acceptance or condemnation, their welfare or injury, depends. If there be a willingness to receive and follow right views, or to yield to and act according to what they know to be right, their faith and knowledge respecting whatever is right will be more and more increased and confirmed. But if to avoid singularity, persecution, and reproach, or if for the sake of popularity, worldly interest or applause, we act counter to the convictions of our own minds, darkness will ensue; perplexity and doubt will arise; and being left without that divine aid and power so necessary

to faith in our present condition, we may be incapable of discerning what is right, and believe things the most absurd and injurious to our peace and welfare, and which may remove us at the greatest distance from the path of true knowledge and correct views.

The Apostle thus describes the cause of darkness, blindness, and degeneracy: "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind," or as in the margin, to "a mind void of judgment." As they did not rightly use, but abused the powers of their mind, God deprives them of the right use of those powers. This agrees with that passage in Thessalonians, where it is said, because they received not the love of the truth, they should be left to strong delusion, to believe a lie.

[For the Reformer and Christian.]

HUMAN BELIEF.

"Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark ix. 24.

On the subject of human belief, much has been said and written; so much indeed as almost to lead to the conclusion, that to add thereto, will tend more to increase than to diminish or remove the difficulties already thrown around the subject: I say *thrown around the subject*, because that all truth, when understood, is in itself simple, easy to be comprehended, and free from difficulty. The difficulties therefore arise in endeavoring to reconcile the various ideas and opinions of men with what we know to be truth, or with each other; and hence in proportion to the increase of conflicting opinions is the increase of difficulty. Seeing then that the subject of human belief (not belief itself) is involved in difficulties, owing to a diversity of opinions, and seeing also that the truth in

the matter is *simple, easily comprehended, and free from difficulty*, what remains for every individual who feels himself interested in, and who is sincerely inquiring after truth, but to rise above the smoke and confusion occasioned by conflicting opinions, and each, for himself, behold the simplicity of human belief.

That such a thing as belief exists, no one can rationally doubt; for the individual who could doubt this, could doubt also his own existence, and thus suppose life only imaginary. Since then it is obvious to all, that none can doubt of the existence of belief, is it not equally clear that none can doubt as to what it is? Does it require a lengthy and an elaborate research into volumes whose authors have long since slept the sleep of death, to convince us of what constitutes belief? No. Every individual believes that he possesses a conscious existence, while no individual can believe that he has produced his own existence; so that whatever difficulty any may find in expressing the cause of their belief or unbelief, all know the cause: and as every one for himself knows what human belief is, all the speakers and writers in the world could not make him know it any better: therefore to spend time and labor in persuading men to know what they already know, is to say the least, but useless. Such is the construction of our intellectual faculties, that we cannot believe without evidence, (real or supposed) and before men can change their belief, they must have corresponding evidence.

All remarks therefore on the subject of belief, further than go to remove apparent difficulty out of the way of the sincere inquirer, and to "justify the ways of God to man," tend rather to bewilder, than to inform the mind, and to darken counsel by the multiplying of worlds. The belief in the existence of a Creator, the great first cause of all things, is at the present day by some not only discarded, but publicly scoffed at and ridiculed; and

consequently, all revelation is by such despised as "a cunning devised fable," or as the idle ravings of a bewildered imagination; while they have claimed to themselves the vantage ground of rationality, and place to the charge of ignorance and superstition, the honest opinions of those who differ from them in sentiment, and who cannot yield an assent to their claims.

But are such individuals consistent with themselves? If so, then indeed is the belief in a Creator vain—the gospel of Christ vain—and faith also vain: for if unbelief be right, then is belief wrong—and if there be no Creator, there can be no revelation—and if no revelation, there can be no faith, and nothing is so rational as unbelief. But the inconsistency of professed unbelief destroys its own claim to rationality; for what is rationality but the right exercise of reason? And what is reason as defined by professed unbelievers? It is, they say, "the faculty of the mind enabling the possessor to collect data, and judge therefrom: and where no data exists, we have no use for our reasoning powers. If we undertake to form conclusions without data, we imagine, we do not reason." Where then it may here be asked, is the data for the *non-existence* of a Creator, on which unbelief is founded? To this question, professed unbelief itself pleads *doubt* and *uncertainty*, and consequent *ignorance*. And what *data* can reason collect in *ignorance*, on which to exercise its powers? And if *doubt*, *uncertainty*, and *ignorance* form not a province in which reason can act, (as is evidently the case) do not professed unbelievers *imagine*, and not *reason*, when they undertake to form conclusions without data? For professed unbelievers to assert that they do not form conclusions, shields them not from obvious inconsistency: for to assert that one belief is wrong, is to assert that some other belief is right, and that belief, whatever it may be, becomes a creed, and every creed is the result of conclusions. In order therefore to

adopt unbelief, it is self-evident that unbelievers must form conclusions.—But how beings calling themselves rational can form conclusions without data, or with such only as spring from doubt and uncertainty, carries in its front "*Mystery*."

Does not the mind of man naturally aspire after knowledge—how then can it rest in uncertainty? It cannot—it is altogether irrational to suppose that it can—the terms are in themselves contradictory, and prove the impossibility; for where there is uncertainty there can be no rest; and hence may it be truly said of professed unbelievers, they are "restless wanderers after rest."—Since then it is self-evident that in unbelief there can be no rest for the mind, where are its paramount claims upon rational intelligence? Or what rational claim can that have upon human reason which dooms it to perpetual toil without *data* and without *rest*?

Strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that the most rational argument in favor of the existence of a Creator, on whom creation in all the immensity of its extent is dependent, is used by professed unbelievers against a belief therein; namely—the inability of human faculties to comprehend the mode of his existence. Whereas, the very idea of a Creator (or power) to produce the physical and intellectual universe, presupposes that he is above all created power; and being above the faculties of which man is possessed, and which he knows he has not imparted to himself, is it not obviously at variance with every acknowledged principle of reason to suppose that the intellectual faculties of man could in the nature of things comprehend their Creator?—Would it not be equally as consistent, to expect a stream to rise higher than its fountain, or an effect to be greater than its cause; the absurdity of which is admitted by all?

"A God alone can comprehend a God:
Could we conceive him, God he could not
be:
Or he not God, or we could not be men."

Without therefore pursuing the track of metaphysical argument to prove the existence of a Creator, we discover that the premises which professed unbelief assumes, namely, doubt and uncertainty, defeats itself, and destroys its claims upon rational intelligence; confirming the truth of scripture testimony, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God," as no rational being can consistently say so.

Let us but turn the scale from the *non-existence* to the existence of a Creator, and all that we can either see, hear, feel, taste, or smell, unite in their testimonies in favor of the latter; for we know not, nor can we conceive of any thing in the visible creation having the power of self-production, or of acting as its own creator—and as the universe itself exists and is visible, we infer from our knowledge of visible existencies, (and not from ignorance or uncertainty) that it has been produced by some power apart from itself, and *that* power is its Creator; while to this, even professed unbelief adds its testimony by asserting that *knowledge* and not *ignorance* is the basis of human belief.

But has human reason no evidence or *data* for a belief in *invisible* existencies? A moment's reflection may convince any unprejudiced mind that it has. Is there not a power existing in the mind which sets in motion the body, and to which power the body is a willing servant? This none will deny. Is then this power *visible*? It will be admitted by all that it is not; and yet who can disbelieve in the existence of such a power? Surely none—and why?—Because every individual for himself possesses *invisible* evidence of this *invisible* power, while all that any individual can either *know* or *express* of this power is from its effects. And hence it is obvious that every rational being believes in the existence of an invisible power, while of its nature he is ignorant: and thus we find that even professed unbelievers in a Creator, are practical believers in a power which they cannot comprehend;

"Apostles thus are orthodox divines."

For what do professing christians more than profess to believe in a Creator whose nature they cannot comprehend?

But the belief of the true christian is termed *faith*, in contradistinction from human belief, it being the *invisible* evidence of *invisible* things; or as the apostle Paul has described it, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"—whereas human belief proceeds from *external* evidence conveyed through the medium of *external* senses.

Neither does *faith* stand, as does *human belief*, in the wisdom of man, but "in the power of God." The wisdom of man, or in other words, the proper application of man's external senses can lead him no higher than the truth or falsity of propositions within the province of these senses; any thing above this, his wisdom unaided cannot reach. In proof of this we see that if man's thirst for knowledge leads him beyond the power of his own vision, he borrows a greater faculty from the telescope or lens, and thus becomes a dependent; so that all the faculties of man unite in attesting the *rationality of faith*, and to teach us that *reason*, if honestly pursued, will lead to *faith*, and to seek it where alone it can be found—"in the power of God"—and not in faculties which are themselves dependent.

But as in order to come to God, we must "believe that he is," (and that he is greater than human intelligence) "and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him," therefore it is that the mind of man, proud of its acquired intelligence, is unwilling to humble itself to the simplicity of truth, and to acknowledge its dependence on the source from whence flows all its ability, and on whom its powers are dependent; and to conceal its want of humility, it resorts to the subterfuge of a *professed unbelief*: so that it is evident that what is called *unbelief* is founded in human *ignorance*, and is upheld by human *pride*, professions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Is it not then evident that professed unbelief in the existence, or in other words, an assumed belief in the non-existence of a Creator, is altogether *irrational*, and without claim upon human intelligence, being without *data*, save such only as the *imagination* can collect from *doubt* and *uncertainty*, and depriving its votaries of any present *rest* for reason, and excluding from them even the hope of a future *rest*, and thus dooming them to

"Seek for staple pleasures on the tossing wave."

And is it not equally evident that faith alone is truly rational, and urges itself upon human intelligence by every consideration which raises man above the brute; being founded upon all the *data* or evidence which *reason* can collect, both *external* and *internal*, both *visible* and *invisible*; and imparting to its possessor a present rest from all the supposed embarrassments of reason; for

"Faith is not reason's labor, but repose," and implants in the mind the hope of the future—

"Where he shall bathe his weary soul,
In seas of endless rest—
And not a wave of sorrow roll,
Across his peaceful breast."

And as *faith* is not *irrational* but rational, so also is *adoration*, it being the offspring of *faith*: hence we hear the apostle Paul say, (and with him, the present unworthy writer on this most worthy of all subjects, would say) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

A FRIEND TO TRUTH.

RELIGION AND FAITH.

There is something in the nature of true religion, and particularly with respect to faith, which, to those who have never had any experience of it, can be viewed in no other light than that of fanaticism or delusion of the mind. It cannot be comprehended or even conceived, except by those who

are acquainted with its operations. It is nevertheless true and real, without a particle of delusion, as all those know who have experienced its effects; and none others can possibly know that it is *true and real*. For says the apostle, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

True faith will never fail any one in that which it embraces, or be unrealized in its expectations; for it is the gift of God, bestowed as he sees fit. David had such a faith when he went forth against Goliath. God gave him faith to believe that he should prevail; and under this faith, he felt no fear, as he would without such a faith. And whenever the Lord gives faith in regard to any event, however unlikely or improbable that event may be, it is certain to be realized. For the Lord would not give us faith in respect to certain events, did he not foresee that events would be conformable to the faith given, or did he not intend to cause them to be so. Elisha had full faith and confidence that God would protect him, when the king of Syria sent horses and chariots, and a great host to take him. Hence he felt no fear, and told his affrighted servant (who had not such faith, and who, on seeing them, said, *Alas, my master! how shall we do?*) "Fear not," said Elisha, "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." But the fears of his servant not subsiding, Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and in an outward vision, "he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This calmed all his fears, and convinced him that Elisha and himself were under the protection of the Almighty, and were safe.

God was the giver of faith to Elisha, as well as to his servant, though not by the same means. Nor is it in the power of man, to have such a faith

when he chooses, not even the best of men. The apostle Paul in one place, speaks of himself and companions, having the sentence of death in themselves, or all prospect of deliverance taken away, "insomuch," says the apostle, "that we despaired even of life." Witness, also, the case of Elijah. Under the command of the Lord to go and show himself unto Ahab, he felt no fear in going to present himself before him, feeling an assurance of divine protection, although Ahab had long been searching for him in all the adjacent nations and kingdoms, with an intention no doubt of putting him to death. But when his life was threatened by Jezebel, he had no evidence that he should be protected, and under the influence of his fears, he fled away a journey of forty days, unto Horeb or Mount Sinai. If God had given him faith that he should be protected against the threat of Jezebel, Elijah would have had no fear, nor would he have fled away. And had the Lord seen proper, he could as easily have given him a sense of his protection at that time, and made him as destitute of fear, as on other occasions. In such a condition, who could blame Elijah for fleeing away? There were reasons no doubt, why the Lord did not then give him confidence that he should suffer no harm from the hand of Jezebel, and the manner he was fed on his journey to Horeb, would seem to imply that the Lord was not displeased with him for fleeing away. At another time he went with a captain and his fifty men to Ahaziah, king of Israel, for the Lord commanded him to go with him, and told him not to be afraid of him.

All these instances go to show that faith is the gift of God, and that under the Lord's direction and care we have nothing to fear. The Lord is able to deliver us at all times, and if it be best, all things considered, that we should be delivered, the Lord will deliver us. But we should not, like Hezekiah, pray for that which does

not seem in accordance with the divine will and counsels of God; for if such petitions be granted, like that of Hezekiah's, they will not be likely to redound to our benefit or advantage. It is said concerning Hezekiah, after his recovery, "he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem." It is much safer, therefore, to say, "the will of the Lord be done," both in respect to life and every other event, than to have the choice left to ourselves, since our knowledge is imperfect, and we are unable to determine what is best for us in our present condition. The prayer which Socrates dictated to a young man, is a very suitable petition for all—"Give us those things that be good for us, whether they be such things as we pray for, or such things as we do not pray for; and withhold from us those things that would be hurtful to us, if they be such things as we do pray for."

"The following extract of a letter," says a southern paper, "is from a highly intelligent friend, deeply read in human nature."

"When that wonderful instrument, the Declaration of Independence, of priestcraft, and kingcraft, in the face of a wondering world, gave a name and a character to man, such as he had never known, or even conceived of before, they laid a foundation and raised an ensign to go before the nations, which the gates of hell shall never prevail over. Our example has set Europe crazy, and she is now pressing to occupy the ground which we first obtained; and as it is ordained by providence that we keep the foreground of human progression, there is little to fear except in our ignorance of those means and expedients which such circumstances are obliged to create. It is time alone that must ripen the present state of things into facts not to be denied. The long-forming currents which give the pre-

sent aspect of our country, are delivering us up into the hands of old necessity, who never asks questions of his slaves, nor admits of any denials. It matters not who gets the presidency of these United States, or who may get themselves into office of any kind, the time has arrived when all the complex and selfish character of the creature will be shaken to pieces, and in the result we shall not loose any thing that is worth the keeping to the good of future ages."

TO OUR READERS.

Some have expressed dissatisfaction with the course we have lately seen proper to pursue in the pages of the Reformer, and particularly with regard to treating on subjects of prophecy. We have no disposition to blame any for doing this. The exercise of an honest and independent judgment, is their right—they should allow to us the same right. We have considered the prophecies of much interest and importance at this time; for we are on the eve of some of the most momentous events, which will shake every government and kingdom to its centre, and demolish in the end, most of what now exists, preparatory to a better state of things. There is no clue to guide us in respect to what is future, except the prophecies, and these plainly point out the appalling, trying, and afterwards desirable events which are approaching.

It is true, there has been so much misapplication and misconception respecting the prophecies, that we are not surprised so little confidence is now placed in any thing that may be said with regard to them; and hence what we have said, has not been so much a matter of choice as of duty.—We have stated only what has been presented to us with clearness, and events will soon show if we have been mistaken, and by this criterion we are willing to be judged. We are now living under the fifth vial, and the confusion, perplexity and embarrassment

(the scripture meaning of darkness) which at present rest upon all the European nations, will not continue longer than the latter part of next July—corresponding to the three days of darkness which rested upon Egypt under one of the plagues, during which time “they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place.” Three prophetic days, answering to three years, will then be fulfilled, reckoning from the late French revolution, when the fifth vial began to be poured out. After the expiration of this time, if not before, the darkness and perplexity at present resting on the different countries of Europe, will be removed: they will see the objects they deem it proper to pursue, and will move against one another, to the demolition of one of the contending principles which now agitate the various countries of Europe. The principles to be demolished, are those on the side of tyrannical rule and clerical ascendancy, to the establishment for a time, of liberal, mixed with deistical and atheistical opinions.

In the mean time our own country seems not likely to remain neuter in the great drama of strife that is to be acted throughout the world. And indeed, as this country is further advanced in the principles of liberty and knowledge than any other, and has abused these privileges, it is probable that the last and final scourge, or in other words, the calamities and afflictions for preparing mankind to return unto the Lord, and come under his government alone, will first be experienced here, and that a truly right people also, as a seed or leaven to people in other countries, will first be raised up in our land. This seems to be confirmed by various prophecies, to which reference will hereafter be made. It is certain, and declared by numerous prophecies, that a most trying and calamitous time will precede a right state of things, not only in our own, but in every other country; such as none at present, however gloomy may be their forebodings, can adequately conceive.

It will require, indeed, no slight or common affliction and calamity, to bring the people of this day, and particularly high-minded professors and preachers, to that child-like humility and littleness in their own sight, so much inculcated in the New Testament, and lead them to put their trust and confidence wholly in the Lord.—Very few at this time among professing christians, are much removed from deism or atheism, as little as they may suppose this to be the case. For where is that trust and confidence in the Lord, and in his providence, which have distinguished the children of God in every period of the world? Does such a want of trust and confidence in an Almighty arm, as is now manifested among professing christians in general, correspond with christianity, which teaches that not a sparrow falleth on the ground without the Father, and that even the hairs of our head are all numbered? As well may we doubt every part of christianity, as doubt such plain and positive declarations as these made by Christ himself; and yet, how few are to be found who believe these truths, or act in accordance with such a belief. It is wholly inconsistent, therefore, for professors in this day, to call any class of men deists or atheists, when they are so little removed from such a condition themselves, though perhaps they know it not.

But the Lord will ere long teach us himself, and he will first begin his teaching with sore and grievous sufferings and calamities, which in all probability will soon commence, and they will not terminate till all are cut off who are not truly humbled and brought into subjection to the rule and government of Christ alone.

As an evidence that the last and final scourge or rod of correction, which is to go over all nations, will first begin here, see Isa. xxx. 27, 28, where it is mentioned as “coming from far, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity,” [or toss the nations

with the van of perdition, agreeably to a commentator.] In support of the belief that a right state of things will first be witnessed in our own land, many passages might be referred to.—Among these are the following:—Isaiah, xviii. 7; xxiv. 16; lix. 19; lx. 9; and Zephaniah, iii. 10. With respect to what is to take place in the various countries of Europe, preparatory to the establishment of a right state of things, see Isa. ii. 10, 22; xxiv; xxxiv; and lxiii. All the events set forth in these places, are yet future, and are shortly to be fulfilled.

If the same scenes are to be acted in this country, that are to be acted in Europe, the opening scourge will be inflicted upon professors of religion; next those that afflict them will suffer by the hands of those they have afflicted; and in the next place, these last inflictors of human misery, will have their afflictions, terminating in their complete downfall. For those who inflict misery and shed blood, will never be employed in building the true temple of God, but all those that take the sword will perish by the sword—and nominal professors of religion will be the last to use the sword, and it will be directed both against infidels and true christians, just previous to a right state of things. The downfall of these last inflictors of violence, will be accomplished by their turning their hands one against another, to their entire destruction. These views would not be presented, were they not seen from the prophecies with a clearness not to be withstood—and they are presented with a full consciousness of the responsibility of expressing them. The first operations of these events will begin ere long, before any settled state of things takes place, and they will proceed on to their final termination in the downfall of nearly all that now exists, and the establishment of truth and righteousness throughout the earth, when peace and tranquillity will prevail, and there will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain.

[From the Advocate and Journal.]

GLANCE AT EUROPEAN POLITICS.

The relative situation of Europe, and indeed of the whole world, at the present juncture, appears to the attentive observer so extraordinary—so replete with incongruities—that if the most acute and experienced statesman were to guide his judgment of the future by the rule of precedents, he would be at a loss to find any thing bordering on analogy.

On whichever side we turn our view, we find, with few exceptions, military despotism smothering or attempting to smother the march of liberal principles and institutions, technically called *Propagandism*, whilst the oppressed, still more formidable, slowly, but with steady steps, are preparing for a conflict, on the result of which the stability of thrones or the establishment of free governments will depend. Every thing forebodes a crisis and a speedy solution of the problem. The least spark—a sudden death—an ill judged ordinance—a spontaneous popular movement—a trifle, indeed, may bring on a general conflagration.

PLAGUE IN INDIA.

By the last arrival from England, accounts had been received there of the prevalence of the plague at Bushire, and that its ravages were of the most dreadful description. The disease had almost wholly depopulated the district. It commenced by great weakness, and the sufferers were then attacked with swellings, the pain arising from which was excessive, and continued until death put an end to their misery. At one time there were 2000 bodies unburied in the public streets. Men were hired at high wages to perform this duty, and at one time one hundred persons were so employed. In most of the houses from one to four dead bodies were left unburied for some days. In the Residency Court dead bodies were least exposed.—Notwithstanding the existence of this dreadful state of things, several thieves had pillaged the houses. The Residency had been broken open, and every thing valuable stolen. Whole families were swept off by the disease, and the utmost distress had prevailed. It is extending its ravages towards Persia.

The accounts from Bombay state that much alarm existed there lest the disease should be brought to that presidency.—One vessel had arrived from Bushire, in which seventy out of one hundred and twenty persons on board died of the disease on the voyage.—*Late paper.*

JEW IN THIBET.

The lost ten tribes of the Jews have been found in Little Bucharra, [in the interior of Asia, bordering on China] some of them attending the last Leipsic fair as shawl manufacturers. They speak in Thibet the Hindoo language, are idolators, but believe in the Messiah, and their restoration to Jerusalem; they are supposed to consist of ten millions, keep the Kipour, and do not like white Jews, and call out like the other tribes, "Hear, O God of Israel, there is but one God;" are circumcised, and have a reader and elders.—*Anglo-Germanic Advertiser.*

"While the king acts by the counsels of his ministers, he is not chargeable with miscarriages and misfortunes: they either came through bad counsels, or directly thwarting providences. Sometimes God will have things otherwise than the best counsels have determined; because he sees that the results will, on the whole, be better for the peace and prosperity of that state."—*Adam Clarke.*

FRIENDSHIP.

Desert not your friend in danger or distress. Too many there are in the world whose attachment to those they call friends, is confined to the days of their prosperity. As long as that continues, they are, or appear to be, affectionate and cordial. But as their friend is under a cloud, they begin to withdraw, and separate their interest from his. In friendship of this sort, the heart, assuredly, has never had much concern. For the great test of true friendship is constancy in the hour of danger—adherence in the season of distress. When your friend is calumniated, then is the time openly and boldly to espouse his cause.—When his situation is changed, or misfortunes are fast gathering around him, then is the time of affording prompt and zealous aid. When sickness or infirmity occasions him to be neglected by others, that is the opportunity which every real friend will seize of redoubling all the affectionate attentions which love suggest. These are the important duties, the sacred claims of friendship, which religion and virtue en-

force on every worthy mind. To show yourself warm in this manner in the cause of your friend, commands esteem, even in those who have personal interests in opposing him. This honorable zeal of friendship has, in every age, attracted the veneration of mankind. It has consecrated to the latest posterity, the names of those who have given up their fortunes, and have exposed their lives in behalf of the friends whom they loved; while ignominy and disgrace have ever been the portion of them who deserted their friends in the hour of distress.—*Blair.*

Spanish Church Establishment.

The Spanish Church has 58 archbishops, 684 bishops, 11,400 abbotts, 936 chapters, 127,000 parishes, 7,000 hospitals, 23,000 fraternities, 46,000 monasteries, 135,000 convents, 312,000 secular priests, 200,000 inferior clergy, 400,000 monks and nuns.
Edinburg Review.

PURE DESIRE.

I but desire thy will to know,
That I thy will may do;
May both by words and actions show,
Thy ways are "just and true." *Rev. xv.3.*
J. W.

. Bills we believe have been sent to nearly all the subscribers, so that each may know the state of his accounts—and we would again here repeat, if any to whom the numbers are now forwarded do not wish to continue their subscriptions, they will please return the present number as directed in our last, and settle up their accounts, as we do not wish to retain as subscribers any but such as feel an interest in the work, and will make payment.

The time will soon arrive when many will see the consistency of the course we have lately adopted in the pages of the Reformer; for there is very little true faith now on the earth, as was foretold by Christ would be the case when he should come to set up his kingdom, and subdue the nations to himself—for, "*as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.*"—*Rev. ii. 27.*

The Reformer and Christian is printed on the first of every other month, at one dollar for twelve numbers or a volume. Letters to be addressed and payment made, to T. R. GATES, Proprietor and principal Editor, No. 290 North Third St. Philadelphia. Numbers can be supplied from the commencement of the work.